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O beloved, we have a most gracious God
who never fails to reward those that seek him
diligently, as I formerly shewed you: your
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one shall fall in vain to the ground, but shall
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of immortal Glory, which our blessed Saviour
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FINIS.

The Advancement of Christs Interests the governing End of a Christians Life

A SECOND
SERMON

Preached before the
RIGHT HONOURABLE
Sir JOHN SHORTER Knight,
Lord Mayor

OF THE
CITY of LONDON;
AT
GROCERS-HALL.

January the 9th 1688.

By Daniel Williams.

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To the Right Honourable
Sir JOHN SHORTER, Lord Mayor.

I Present to your Lordship the second Sermon, and the Bookseller is accountable for the late Publication of it.

By the first Sermon, I endeavour'd a real Subjection of Hearts to Christ as King: In this I call Men to the utmost serviceableness to him, as the governing Aim of their Lives. No Service to Christ is possible, but with respect to his Interests; and by our devotedness to these, he determineth our Regards to himself.

If we consider that part of the World call'd Christian, we shall find that nothing is more pretended than the advancement of these Interests of Christ, even when they are most disserved. These are made to patronize the great Weaknesses of some, and the grossest Villanies of others. This induced me to explain and state the Interests of Christ, as far as one Discourse would admit.

Natural Religion is not so oppos'd, as the additional and more peculiar Concernments of Christ as Mediatour: The innate Enmity of Mens Hearts and Satans Attempts, are more directly level'd against these; the former, because they are less advantag'd by those Remains of Light preserv'd by God in our Apostate Nature; the latter, because the Devil well knows, that natural Religion will not be improv'd to any saving Purpose, if these additional Interests of Christ prevail not. This Consideration led me to insist on these Mediatoral Concernments of our Lord Jesus, and persuade to a more special regard to such Points, which Christ is gradually advancing in the World in our Day; and the rather, because the Testimony of Christ and the mighty Influences of the Spirit in any day, are much confin'd to those Points, which at that time he designs the Advancement of.

I am express and large, in proving that the Dedication of our Lives to the service of the Interests of Christ, is an essential Duty of all Christians; because it is the great Security to our holy Profession; it's the Spring of all Endeavours whereby God is glorified, and a common Good promoted; and without it, Truth will be betrayed by Men that make the greatest Noise.

The Hints I am confin'd to, may be subject to various Inferences; to direct which, I do declare, that in general I do intend the persuading Christians to do all that is lawful in their Places, to promote true Religion and Godliness, and their cautious Forbearance of whatever is a certain detriment or hazard thereto.

In particular, I would have none in this Crisis (if duly call'd) scruple Offices from uncertain Events; much less employ them to lower Ends than the Advancement of Truth, and that with all Prudence and Meekness.

I would persuade all Nonconforming Ministers not to neglect the present Opportunity of exercising their Ministry; their Obligation and License to it, is from Christ prior Commission, and not the present removal of a Physical Obstacle: and woe to us if the undoubted Interests of Christ gain not by this Liberty. I think I have more comfort than serving Courts and Gallies would afford, when I reflect that from the 20th Year of my Age, I remember not three Lords Days wherein I have not preached in one place or other.

A

A Subscripce

The Epistle Dedicatory.

A Subsistence to these Ministers I also aim at. How sad is that narrow and unjust Spirit in Men of Estates, which restrains the Gospel for want of Maintenance? I am sure none that know me will suspect a Selfish Design by this.

The only thing I can foresee the need of an Apology for, is my plainness with some Persecutors that are Members of the Church of England, and lately monopolized the Name even from all others of their own Communion. These I call to Repentance for their great Opposition to the Interests of Christ. Some part of the two Days allowed to prepare this Sermon, was spent in debating with my self the expediency thereof, and I judged at last, it was my Duty, and conducive to the publick Good, on such Grounds as these.

The Crime is too notorious to be palliated, when they have Silenced 2000 Ministers, because they durst not lie, &c. and with such rage persecuted their quiet Neighbors for worshipping God according to all the instituted Rules of the Gospel, their Enemies being Judges.

The Effects of their Severities are visible in the Danger, that not only the Power, but the very probable Form of Religion is reduced to.

The Repentance of these very Men, is necessary to divers the Judgments which hang over our heads. That Temper continued makes all healing Methods for accord impossible. If they repent not, it's of little moment if they be irritated by a Call to it; being disowned by all serious Men of their own Party, who indeed were hated and wounded by them as well as the Dissenters.

Yea, God by his present Providences seemeth to design these Men's Repentance, while he is blowing on them from that very Point, where their Faces and Regards were directed in all their mischievous Attempts.

I hope no pious Men of that Party, who approved not these Men's Practices, will think themselves concerned in the Reproof; their Credit and Service being I am sensible of. Yea, I would persuade a Forgiving of the most Guilty, who I exhort to Repentance; and Providence directs the Sufferers not to exact their Repentment, by the Damage it will do to them. It is convenient to explain somewhat in my first Sermon.

- p. 18. By Conditions, I mean the things which the Gospel inseparably exalts on all Men, that shall partake of the saving Blessings of the New Covenant, which are owing to Christ only
p. 22. as the meritorious Cause. By Spiritual Life, I intend that inherent vital Principle where
p. 3. in all Graces are comprehended. By Remedial Law, I mean the Law of Faith, published for the recovery of Apostate Sinners; and by which God will judge the Secrets of Men.

But yet the Objectors are very weak or uncharitable, and little consider what fatal Influence their Distempers have on the Interests of Christ, while they sacrifice the Sovereignty of others to their own foolish aims and Fancies.

It may be added, that I manifestly seek their welfare, much reference is made to the extraordinary Power of Apostolical Administrations, as not so fit to be used as yet, principally intended.

Your Lordship is concerned, or I would not Preface your Name to this Apology. I believe it's your aim to serve Christ in the World. Many of your Affairs may concern the Church, it is not a Selfish Interest you serve. Then you and your Brethren may entirely dedicate your Speech, Power and Advantages, to the real advancement of the Interests of Jesus; not the Design of this plain Discourse, and is the Prayer of

Your Lordships most humble Servant, Daniel Williams.

SERMON

Preached before the
RIGHT HONOURABLE
Sir JOHN SHORTER, Kt. &c.

PHILIPPIANS Chap. I. ver. 21.

For to me to live is Christ.

THE Apostle was in a happy Strait, from his Fitness to live, and Readiness to dye. He knew not well how to fix his Choice, because both Life and Death had a desirable Tendency. There was Service to Christ by his Life, and great Happiness to himself by Death.

Affection to Christ swayed his Inclinations both ways; he loved Christ, and therefore must desire death, that he might fully enjoy him; he loved Christ, and so might incline to a longer life, that he might more advance his Interest. Rational Self-love would move to the Former, yet Regard to Jesus and his Members overwayes him to the Latter. He is content to expect

A Sermon Preached

peet the Crown, rather than quit his Work: And tho Heaven was the better State in it self, and happier for him; he prefers his stay on Earth, as better for the Church, which could not bear his Absence. A wonderful Instance of a Publick Spirit! how enlarged is this Soul, that was assured of Glory in Heaven, and of very sore Tryals on Earth, and would yet tug longer at the Oar for Publick Good, rather than be at Rest!

The great Purposes he resolved to live to, are manifest from his Contentment with the Delays of Glory. Had sensual Enjoyments, and trivial Employments been the Advantage proposed by a longer Life, how impatiently must he have endured a Moments Absence from Heaven? He that knew Death could not lay his Soul asleep, but that it immediately passed into a State of the highest Activity, and Receptiveness, yea, and would be admitted to a near Converse with Christ, and other glorious Objects, which must fully employ these active Powers of the Soul, and fill it with Good to the utmost of its Capacity to receive: Could he (I say) desire an Abode on Earth, to relish carnal or animal Delights, which with him is a *being dead while one liveth*? By no means.

1 Tim. 5. 6.

But my Text represents to us the Design and Tendency of the Apostle Paul's Life. *To me to live is Christ.*

I know there are many things to be inferred from the Words, besides what I think is their principal Scope. As, 1. Christ is a Believers Happiness, while he liveth. 2. Life were worse than Death, were not Christ known, and enjoyed by me in this Life. 3. A Christian's Life is a meer dependance on, and a manifest discovery of the Power and Grace of Christ. Emanati-

Gal. 2. 20.

ons

ons of his Power supports it, and his Grace is displayed in our Lives, when useful to any valuable purposes, or employed in any momentous Actions, But I pass by these to the Chief Design of the Text, which may be expressed under two Heads.

I. An entire dedication of *Paul's* Life to Christ, exclusively of any Carnal Designs of his own.

As if he should have said, I devote my Life to the Glory of Christ, I propose the Advancement of his Interests; my Design is to be Instrumental in his Work, and the propagation of his Concernments: There is no base selfish Turn of my own intended, nor shall my life waste in idle Uselessness. I will be active, and that for him, to the last Moment, and the utmost of my Abilities. This my Judgment dictates as my Duty, to this I am devoted, and on this only I am intent.

II. A persuasion that Christ had been, and still would be advanced by his Life and Labours. This he expresseth in v. 20. *As my expectation and hope, that Christ shall be magnified in my Body, whether by Life, or by Death.* I have by his Grace promoted his Interest, I fear not but the same Aids and Blessing will still concur to the like serviceableness; and so the Issue of my living will be his Gain. This is the *hope* in v. 22. It's no secular Interest of my own is like to be advanced: The building of my House, or erecting Trophies to my Name Expect not. Nay, I am sure, Poverty, Contempt, and Hardships in those respects will attend me; but Christ in his Gospel-Interests will be contributed to, and he will over-rule my Sufferings and Labours to his own Advancement.

A Sermon Preached

The Text, may also include an Hint at the Reason of this Confidence, as to this described Success; it being introduced under such a respect: *For to me to live is Christ.* Sincere devotedness to Christ, is ordinarily successful; and upright Designs duly managed, prove not Abortive. When the best Endowments of a man indisposed to the service of Christ, produce not equal Fruits to the lower Gifts of a Soul engaged for his concerns.

The first of these will be the Subject of my Discourse: *viz.* The Dedication of the Life to Christ. This was no Duty peculiar to the Apostolical Office; and tho' it's predicated of St. Paul in his own Person; yet he affords us an Example which binds our Imitation. Yea it is the fundamental Duty resulting from our Baptismal Vow, included in all our Christian Profession, and supposed in all acceptable Service. So that the Obligation is universal; it's the Duty of all here, even of such who least regard it, yea live in greatest repugnancy to it.

By living to Christ must be meant, living to the promoting, and defence of the Interests of Christ in this World. This his designed Endeavour had a respect to, and to this he devoteth his *Life*: That is, all the opportunities for acting which Life includes, all the Abilities which Life imports, and all the good things he possessed, which are comprehended in the word *Life*, as being less valuable than life is: Even all these he designed to lay out for the Interests of the Blessed Jesus. He valued living for no meaner uses, and determined to live to no lower purpose.

When the advancement of Christ's Interests governeth our Time and Abilities, then to live is Christ. For herein is our living to him within our reach; by
this

this it is expressed, and the evidencing thereof in this instance, is what he hath appointed, and still expecteth from all his Members and Servants.

I need say no more to introduce the Doctrine I purpose to insist on : which is this.

Doct. It is the duty of all Christians to dedicate and employ their lives to the advancement of the Interests of Christ in the World.

It's not sufficient to be religious in Contemplation, or mental Acts; our Lord expecteth, and real Piety inclineth to a vigorous activity in our holy Profession. He will be served by his Members, as they expect to be saved by him. They must imitate him in his Communicative Goodness, and express their resentments of his Grace to them, by these powerful acknowledgments. They must not grudge his Service; tho he redeem them freely, they shall sacrifice all to him; and while he is managing our Interest in Heaven as Intercessor, he will have us employed in his Concernments on Earth, as Instruments dedicated to the advancement of his Name, and enlargement of his Kingdom.

To do thus is agreeable to the inclination of every holy Christian; love to Jesus fills with zeal in this enterprise. Therein they are employed; nothing delighteth them more than any visible success; yea, they bemoan their uselessness when their industry seems greatest. A Hermite's Cell for rest is not esteemed by them as an opportunity for service; tho difficult, and dangerous.

I shall manage this Subject in this method.

I. I will lay down some preliminary Propositions.

II. Acquaint you more fully with the nature of this
Duty,

Duty, of dedicating our Lives to the Interests of Christ.

III. Offer plain Reasons, to put it out of doubt, that to dedicate our Lives to Christ is the indispensable duty of all of us. And then apply these things more particularly.

Prop. I. Satan, the World, and the Flesh have an interest among men; in the overthrowing whereof, much of the Interests of Christ consisteth.

The Interests of the former are one, and principally stated, and managed by the Devil. He set up the World as an idol, and the Flesh as a Ruler, by introducing Sin into the World: so that the whole may be called his Interest; the inclinations of the Flesh affording him advantages, and the World yielding him means to advance that Interest by.

This Interest of Satan is fixed, 1. In opposition to the original Dominion of God among Men. 2. To the Attempts and Successes of Christ in restoring of God's Dominion, and advancing some additional Interest of his own, with respect to fallen Man.

1. The Interest of Satan is fixed in opposition to the original Dominion of God among men.

Ecc. 7. 29.
Gen 1. 27.

Man was made upright, loyal to God, glorious in the image of God on the Soul, and expressing the Nature of God in light, love, justice and purity, &c.

Eph. 2. 2.

Satan hastily engaged in a Design of overthrowing the Authority of God, defacing his Image, and introducing his own Temper and Power in the hearts and practices of Men. He soon effected this, by the Compliance of our first Parents with his Snares, and pursueth it from one Age to another, *still working in the Children of disobedience.*

Hence

Hence you may easily conclude, that his Interest lieth in Man's rebellion against his Maker, darkness of mind as to Divine Matters, Injustice, Cruelty, Irreligion, Blasphemy, Uncleanliness, Intemperance, Wrath, Earthliness, and all things which render Men devilish or brutish. His great Concern was to dethrone God, whom he hated; and to destroy Man, whose happiness he envied; tho he concealeth the latter, that he may the better effect it.

2. Satan's Interest is in opposition to the Attempts of Christ for restoring of God's Dominion, and advancing some additional Interests of his own with respect to fallen Man.

Satan hoped from the sanction of the Law; and God's dealing with himself; that his Design so far accomplished by the Fall, would never miscarry; but that such Rebellion and Misery begun so to be executed, could never be retrieved. He enjoyeth the prospect of a quiet Throne but a small moment; then a Curse (which affects him, tho spoken to the Serpent) seizeth him as a Tempter, and Christ sets up as his Antagonist, to recover the Elect, revive the trampled Interests of God among rebellious Sinners, and erect to himself a glorious Name and Body, as the Mediatorial Head.

Satan endeavoureth the blasting of these Attempts of Christ, and the support of his own Interests thus threatened: and hereby we see, there is an Interest of Satan's, which tho to the same ends, is yet managed more directly in opposition to Christ, as Redeemer.

This lieth in obstructing the Gospel, hardning the heart to impenitency, *blinding mens minds lest they should believe*; advancing Idolatry and Superstition, in opposition to the Worship of Christ; perverting the

1 Thess. 2. 18.
2 Cor. 4. 4.

the mind with Errors, contrary to the Truths revealed; persecuting the Members of Christ; silencing a faithful Ministry, dividing the Church; destroying godly Discipline, causing Backslidings and Apostacy; with whatever else may hinder the Attempts of Christ, or blast the Successes of our Redeemer in any place, person, or matter: that by all he may obviate the gracious Purposes of Jesus towards men, and make his Enterprize abortive.

How vigilant, subtil, and unwearied is Satan in managing this Interest? he engageth all instruments, he takes advantages of all Tempers and Circumstances; oft influenceth good men to serve his Purposes; transformeth himself sometimes *into an Angel of light*, at other times as a Dragon poureth out a flood of persecution. Innocent things he oft abuseth; by things seemingly indifferent he propagates his Designs, as well as by grosser matters. He waits every Age to obstruct the Points Christ seems designed to gain, (called by the Spirit *the truth of the present time*) as if he were content to endure past instances of Christ's Conquest, which he could not hinder. He refineth his Interests according to the light that groweth, that they may be the more likely to be complied with: tho every step he gaineth be but a degree, which he would improve to the utmost villany, by a gradual process.

2 Pet. i. 12.

Mar. 8. 33.

2 Cor. 11. 14.

Rev. 12. 3, 15.

Rev. 13. 3,

11, 12, 13, 14.

15, 16, 17, 18.

The more eminently any thing, Constitution, or Party, expresseth his prevalency, or serveth the Devil's purpose; the more his Interest is staked therein, and his Power exerted thereby. Thus after *Rome* failed his Design, he begins an Idolatrous Apostacy in the Christian Church; and giveth the Head of that Apostacy (under the emblem of a *Lamb with*

before the LORD MAYOR.

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no born) wonderful skill, and power, by him he corrupts the Church, and encounters the growing Kingdom of our Lord, as the great Antichrist. By him Satan's Interests are kept up for many Ages over many Nations, wearing a Christian name; and the remains of his infection disturb the Interests of Christ in Churches relieved from grosser Pollutions; which is effected by Customs, and Officers uninstituted by Christ; by Errors eclipsing the Authority, Operations, Merits, and free Grace of our Blessed Lord, wherein many departed from *Babylon* are too deeply engaged. In every one of these, Satan's Interest consisteth, either as a means which Satan makes use of, or as it stands in opposition to any Truth and Institution of Christ.

Much of the Interests of Christ consists in opposing each of these, and blasting those Counter-designs of Satan. Wonderful will be the Scheme of Christ's Counter-acting, and baffling these various Efforts, when the methods and seasonableness of all shall be at once made known.

Prop. II. All men by nature are devoted to the Interest of Satan, the World and Flesh.

Satan executeth his Purpose by Men as Slaves in Chains. It's true, this is generally by uniting his Interests with theirs, and so serving himself by them, while they are acting their own Lusts and consulting a fleshly Interest. They are bribed by advantage, engaged by grandure, or politicke reasons; whereby they seem to justify the Devil's drudgery. They favour some Errors, as the lusts of the Mind; others, as leading to licentiousness, or countenancing them therein. Their corrupt hearts are under the government of lust; and the World being their Idol, the Devil may

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thereby

sinners in its awakened foresight of Eternity, when enlightened as all by the Gospel; but still their Enmity vents its dislike against the Inwards, and power of Religion; tho' the Form thereof is become thus necessary.

Phil. 3. 3.

They despise worshipping God in the Spirit as unintelligible, because unseen. A lively Ministry is hated, as disquieting their seared Consciences: They loathe the strictly Pious, as a Reproach to themselves. A progress in Reformation in the Church is obstructed from inward antipathy to any further Advance to Christ, and hazard to secular Interests thereby: Or it looks too trivial to be contended for by them, to whom all Religion is indifferent, further than as rivited by long Custom. Yea, they oppose it from a proud Conceit that it would reproach their former usage as erroneous and imperfect.

Indeed sometimes the Profane grow zealous for some Cause of Christ, but never for the Sake of Christ. Applause, security to their own Interest, or long Custom, awaken their Concern: God by his Providence supports his own Cause By Evil Men: their Estates, Honour, Emulation, Quarrels, and the like, influence their Endeavours in that which proves a Service to the Truth. They are often zealous for a lower Degree of Reformation, in opposition to a greater; not seeing that that lesser Degree ceaseth to be the Interest of Christ, when it becomes an Impediment to, or Rival with Reformation in greater Instances.

But however the Ungodly may be thus over-ruled to comply with any thing which belongs to Christ, their prevailing Inclination is to betray all of Christ which they profess, when damage to their fleshly Interests attends it. Yea in a quiet Season their Religion

dwindles

dwindles into an empty Form; the Truths of the Gospel are supplanted by encroaching Errors, and Christianity so clogg'd and eclipsed in evil mens management, that it hardly retains what deserves that Name. To this opposition in the nature of Man to the Interests of Christ, must be ascribed the wonderful Degeneracy of Christian Churches: And as far as the remains of Corruption influence the Best Men, Christ shall suffer by them in his Concernments: His Name shall endure reproach, and his Ministers damage; his Church is divided, Love destroyed, the Conversion of Sinners hindered, Advances in Godliness obstructed; and many such ways our sinful Natures disserve, yea oppose the Interests of our Blessed Lord. This should make the Pious watchful, as not ignorant they have Lusts which the Devil may improve to the damage of Christ. And it should make the Ungodly suspicious, when they contend with many good men, that it is not the Interest of Christ they are engaged for, which they are so far-likelier to mistake and oppose, than those more Holy persons are.

Prop. IV. Obligations and a Call to Service, result from, and are measured by mens different Places and Capacities for the advancements of Christs Interests.

All should be devoted to it, but all are not equally capable of it; nor called to express it in the same Instances. None should usurp another's Station, under pretence of Service; yet all must be diligent to the utmost of their own Talents. God hath wisely ordained variety of Callings, with a tendency in their Nature to his Use; Providence disposeth and fitteth men to these several Offices. The faithfulness of the meanest is regarded; *Servants do serve the Lord Christ, Col 3. 23. 24.*
when.

Luk. 21. 2.

Mal. 3. 16.

1 Sam. 3. 13.

Mal. 1. 8, 14.

When their meane Employ is commended with an
obedientiall respect to him. *The Vine* from the good
stock is a commended Offering; and a book of re-
membrance treasur'd in the concerned Thoughts, and
edifying Discourses of them that fear the Lord, when
disabled from performing more.

But Christ will not accept a faint endeavour from
a man of Strength; nor a bare advice against Sin,
when we are invested with Authority to restrain it;
as you see in *Elis* case. A few pence are not fit pay-
out to a good use, for him who hath a great Estate.
We be to him, that in any respect hath a *Male in his
Flack*, and goes to God the *Blind and lame*. Not dis-
cerning this, keeps so many useless and ill employed.
All may be useful to Christ in their own place, by
doing or suffering; none may neglect the greatest
service which their Callings and Gifts give opportu-
nity for. Magistrates, Ministers, Parents, are by
their place Servants to the Lord Jesus, and for him
should they be employed.

No Station is so high, as to plead exemption by its
dignity; nor any Gifts so eminent, as to allow remis-
ness. To forbear the utmost service of Christ in the
Ministry, when dedicated to him in that Office, is sa-
cilegious: yea, a degree thereof is chargeable on men
in any other Office wherein God hath placed them.

No man may refuse any Office or Work, to which
Christ manifestly calleth him: a call to service, or suf-
fering, enureth sufficient aids; and we know not what
we can do, or suffer, till our work or trial discover
what supplies Christ will afford. *Zerubbabel* is called
to build the Temple, when visible abilities rendered
the success improbable; but he attempteth it, and
succeedeth under the influence of that: *Be strong, for*

Hag. 2. 4.

I am with you. We must attempt what Christ makes our duty, and he will take care his Interest shall not suffer by our weakness.

Prop. V. The success of all faithful endeavours to advance the Interest of Christ, depends on the influence and blessing of God thereon.

He buildeth the Temple, and will bear the glory, Zech. 8. 13. whoever be the Instruments. *He that planteth, tho it be a Paul, and he that watereth, tho it be an Apollos,* 1 Cor. 3. 7.

are nothing, but God that giveth the increase. There is an hidden energy and disposition of circumstances which do effect what we otherwise vainly attempt.

No concernment of Christ would prosper in the World, if left to the sole management of them, who are most fitted or devoted to it: their power being so incompetent to the opposition which every design of Christ meets with.

The interest which a subtil and mighty Devil hath in men, the abject state and vile inclinations of mankind, the suitableness and power of sensitive things, the enmity of the heart against Christ, the incapacity of a dead blind World to relish, and perceive the nature, glory and advantage of all the Designs of Christ: are all such obstacles, as might cause us to despair, if a Divine Power were not at hand to execute this purpose.

To set up God's Throne, cast down Satan's Kingdom, and convert Sinners, was an enterprise becoming only an Almighty Saviour to undertake, and possible only for him to effect. Therefore we should in all our endeavours rely on his help, and in every success humbly acknowledge him. He is pleased to secure this honour to himself, by blessing often the most probable means, and giving the greatest lifts to his Interest, by Instruments too contemptible to conceal his Arm.

It's.

II. 49. 4.

It's enough for us, that our *work is with the Lord* for reward, when our upright labours are in vain as to the event. Yea, he may hereafter prosper our attempts beyond what their present influence can promise.

Prop. VI. I hope I need not add, that the Doctrine of Merits receiveth no support from our greatest Services.

Rom. 6. 23.

Our Forfeitures are too many, our Performances too imperfect, our Engagements too strong, Divine Aids too arbitrary, and the Rule of Righteousness too strict, to allow us to plead our Service in Bar to eternal life as a gift; or to the atonement of Christ, as the only meritorious Cause of all the good we hope for. Whatever evidence our faithfulness gives to the sincerity of that faith, whereby Christ is made ours; whatever encouragement the promises may yield to the diligent Soul, no upright heart can be puffed above subscribing his hearty Amen to that Caution of our Lord's, *When ye have done all, say, we are unprofitable Servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.* No, not that Lord, so as not to need forgiveness for many faults cleaving thereto.

Luke 17. 10.

I shall now proceed to explain the nature of this duty of dedicating our lives to the Interests of Christ. This will be done under these two enquiries: 1. What are the Interests of Christ? 2. What is it to dedicate our lives to the serving these Interests.

Qu. 1. What are the Interests of Christ, to serve which our lives should be dedicated?

Ans. All the declared Designs of Christ in his Mediatorial Office, in opposition to the Devil, the World, and the Flesh.

To this must be referred all the ends which he pursueth,

sueth, and to effect which, his heart is intent on; and injoineth our concurrence in. They may well be called his Interests, considering, they are things undertaken by him; all his Institutions, Laws and Providences refer to them; he died, sent his Spirit, and still intercedeth, as means of their accomplishment. His Glory and Truth, as Mediator, is concerned in them. These things may be referred to these three Heads.

1. The restoration of God's original Dominion and Image among men, against the usurpations and defilements of Satan, and vile apostacy and rebellion of Sinners.

His Design is to *destroy the works of the Devil*, and advance that purity and order, which the entrance of Sin expelled. His Interests under this Head consists in the conversion of Sinners, obedience of men to all the Laws of God; their resemblance of his imitable Perfections, and utter renouncing of all that is devilish, or brutish. His concern is to enlighten the ignorant mind, subdue disorderly appetites to the dominion of Grace, and Reason. Sound knowledg, fear of God, love to God and one another, justice, temperance, chastity, discharge of relative duties, Divine Worship in opposition to Idolstry, and all godliness, truth, and goodness, are parts of his Interest, which men should studiously promote, that God may be the portion and supreme end of men.

2. Such things wherein the peculiar glory and influence of Christ, as Mediator, consists.

Under this are included every Doctrine, Institution and matter which relate to Christ, and are superadded to what concerned Mankind before the Fall.

He died to be Lord both of dead and living. And his Interest which we must serve, is in these things: gathering to himself a body of all that belong to the

Eph. 4. 13.

election of Grace; the improvement of every Believer to the *measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*. That he prevail and be acknowledged as Prophet, Priest and King; all pardon and favour with God ascribed to his Merits, all grace derived from his fulness, and all duty performed in his name. That his People; who be his Members and Heritage, be succoured, his Churches have their due privileges, all worship managed by Gospel-rule, a Gospel-ministry encouraged; no Officers imposed, but whom he hath appointed in his House; and none of them neglected: love and peace maintained among his Followers, and they admitted to the privileges of his Sanctuary, on his terms.

It belongs to him that there be a godly Magistracy, a Gospel Discipline, and whatever else he hath either appointed as Means, or declared as Instances of his Triumphs as Mediator; and also that the Gospel terms of Life be truly stated, and complied with.

3. The Interests of Christ may be considered as they stand in an opposition to such errors, parties, and practices, wherein the Attempts of Satan against the glory and influence of the Mediator consist.

The Devil sets up his Standard at every point, which Christ gaineth; no Truth escapeth his Assault; and he never wants men of wit and power to abet his opposition: yea, generally the Croud hath been of his side, when the Witnesses of Jesus have been few and contemptible. Satan hath his stated Sects and Parties, and tho many Truths of Christ be owned by some Sects, yet in whatever respect they are denominated from their Contests against Christ, the Interest of Jesus lieth in opposition to them. Under this Head I shall be sparing, because I fear no Party hath all the Interest of Christ, and nothing else. And I hope God is about some
great

great things, which will be attended with such a light and spirit, as may end in a name comprehensive of all that is Christ's, and exclusive of all else. He hath promised his Church, *Thou shalt be called by a new name*, II 62. 2. *which the mouth of the Lord shall name.* Christian is the best we yet know, but how much opposite to Jesus is pretended to under that name? However I must not fear to say, the Interests of Christ consist in Protestantism, in opposition to Popery in all things wherein it is Antichristian. (Which are too many.) The Interest of Christ is in Non-conformity, in opposition to the imposing sinful and doubtful terms of Communion of Saints; or exercise of the Ministry; and sacrificing the great things of God to a Constitution instituted by Christ, and incapable of promoting real Religion to that degree, as I hope many of its abettors desire.

Q^y. 2. What is it to dedicate our lives to the service of the Interests of Christ?

I must suggest to you, that under the word *life* (by a Synecdoche and Metonymie) are included our time, talents, opportunities, all enjoyments, yea life it self, as an offering, whenever the service, or testimony of Christ require it. Having premised this, I answer,

Ans^r. 1. It implieth a solemn offering of our selves and all in our power, to Christ.

This is enjoined; *Present your Bodies a living sacrifice*, Rom. 12. 1. *&c.* This ought to be expressly done in our first Conversion, and oft repeated, especially at the Lord's Table. Engrave the stamp of Christ on all you possess, and acknowledg his propriety. Lord, my self, and all that is mine, I offer to thee, and will serve thee with. This Vow in thy constant observation will keep thee from a supine neglect, when opportunity of service is given; and silence all repinings, when his service is hard or expensive

penfive. He that neglects this, will soon find matter of excuse in his holy profession.

Ans. 2. The Service of Christ and his Interests must be the governing end in all deliberate Acts and Contrivances.

Acts 20. 24.

Men are devoted to what they chiefly intend. Paul expresseth that his life was indeed dedicated thus, when amidst all dissuaves from a dangerous duty, he asserts, *I count not my life dear, so I may finish my course, and the Ministry which I have received.* Wo to them whose Consults still terminate in some selfish matter, and are concerned for Christ only by the by. Providence may serve it self by their Sins, as well as by their chance Services, which they hardly intend. Christ accounts none faithful to his Concerns, who provide for them last, but chiefly contrive for things that are none of his. Which prevail when in competition? for what are we most industrious? about what are we most sollicitous? that our lives are dedicated to, whether they be the Interest of Christ, or other things.

There is an actual and stated employing our lives and all our abilities for Christ.

This dedication consists not in faint acts of the mind, but extends to, and expresseth it self in the doing all we can to promote Christ's Interests.

Thy heart cannot concur in this dedication, when thy performances do not conduce to exalt him. You must be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. To live is Christ; when our parts are engaged to plead for Truth, our power subserveeth his Claims, our time and Estates are employed to uphold his Gospel, advance Piety, and

Phil 1. 27.

show the testimony of Jesus, striving together for the faith of the Gospel. He dedicates his life and talents to Christ, who useth them for Christ in all opportunities of doing, and willingly parts with them, rather than

renounce

renounce his Interests. *Moses* yields an instance, when he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, renouncing all temporal hopes, to give a specimen of future service. Heb. 11. 25, 26.

This living to Christ imports also a *stated Course* of life. It's not enough to serve Christ by starts, or occasional acts. It must be our ordinary employ, and the scope of our lives. Our abilities must be still on the altar, and our ears ever open to the Voice of God by all occasions, however frequently they return. Happy they, who early engage in this, and the longest life gives no period to it. Yea, all we do, and every moment we spend, should immediately, or immediately serve the Interest of Christ.

4. We live for Christ, when we value our lives and talents, as they be servicable to the Interests of the Lord Jesus. Men live to themselves, and their time is dedicated to their Lusts; when they esteem their Estates, as they afford fuel to carnal Inclinations; and are fond of long life, as an opportunity of pleasing their Senses and Appetites. To such all is despicable and unesie, which yield not Flash-pleasing contentments. Thus brutishly they express their sentiments, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we shall die.* 1 Cor. 13. 32.

But he that dedicates his life to Christ, is glad of an Estate, that he may be useful by charity in employing it; and express lively hopes of Heaven, when called for Christ's sake to relinquish it. What is esteem with men farther than as it may add to his influence? or parts, or power, than as they qualify him for greater services? a good Soul (assured of Heaven) would gladly resign his Spirit, when he ceaseth to be useful.

What is more awful to such a man, than to be cast by as an *useless Vessel*, whom God disdaineth to employ? Jer. 22. 28. and nothing yields them greater delight, than capacity for the Service of Christ, and success therein. Every

Convert

1 Thes. 2. 19. Convert by their ministry, is their joy, and their Crown. How chearfully do they own Divine Goodness, when their hearts are enlarged to any useful act, and they enabled for it? *Who am I, and what is my People, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort?* are the words of David, when his People had joined with him, in so liberal an offering for Temple-work.

1 Chron. 29.
14.

It's a Curse in a holy man's thoughts, to have talents without a heart to use them for God; and much more to be abused in spending them on his Lusts. How contemptible in their eyes be the *Nimrods* of the Earth, whose greatness is meerly for oppression, foolish grandeur, and the Devils Service? they would prefer the condition of a Beast, to the greatest Monarchs thus brutishly satisfied, and employed. The Saints would not change their persecuted State, for that of the greatest Princes, unless they bring the honour glory and of their Nations to the new Jerusalem: that is, to the Church of Christ fully reformed, and enlarged.

Rev. 21. 26.

Herein you have an account of the Dedication of our lives to Christ; thus do all they to whom to live is Christ.

2 Cor. 13. 10.

Perhaps you may say, these are meer Contemplations, but to do thus is not the Duty of all, nor the Attainment of any, whatever they pretend.

I shall therefore undertake next to prove, that it is the Duty of all of you thus to dedicate your lives to the service of the Lord Jesus and his Interests. I shall offer Reasons to convince you, which refer to us as Men, and Christians.

Reason 1.

That supreme Love and Regard to God, which is the Duty of all men, must dispose them to this Dedication.

Mat. 22. 37.

Can you doubt whether you ought to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind? Must not God be loved above self by every rational Creature? Is it not the appointment of God

God to every man? *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave.* These are Duties resulting from our relation to God as our Maker, and due to him on the account of the transcendent excellency of his Being; yea the very Order of the Universe directs to it: the first cause of all should have the supreme Regard and Interest among all Beings.

Deut. 10. 20.

Now know, that it is impossible to love and regard God in this supreme manner, if you dedicate not all to his Interest. Can any man regard God above himself, and yet serve himself above God? Or can any man serve God above all, and neglect the Interests of God? These are the Occasions he gives men to express their regard to him by: His Essence is above what our goodness can be extended to: but his Saints, his Honour, his Truth, his Image, and Cause, are his Concerns on Earth: and as these are regarded or neglected, he esteems himself valued or despised by us. To each of these the saying of Christ is applicable, *Verily I say unto you, In as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me; and in as much as ye did it to one of the least of these, ye did it unto me.*

Psal. 16. 2.

Mat. 25. 40, 45.

The Relation God hath to, and Concern he hath in these Interests, transfer the respect of all to himself.

So that it is a Duty to dedicate all to his service, and as far as he calls us to it, to employ all to that end; or it is no Duty to love and regard God above all: yea it must then be a Duty to despise God, and prefer Self, Satan, and other Rivals to the infinitely blessed God; which a reasonable Soul must tremble at.

Gods absolute propriety in men, and in all which they possess, makes the sacrifice of all to his Interests a Duty, by all the rules of Justice. Notions of *just* and *unjust* are preserved by God in the Conscience, above most others. Principles of Justice are the strongest in that natural

R. 2.

habit,

habit, which we call *overflows*; and these require that every one receive his own. Now what hath any man, which he hath not received at the hands of God? Is it not he that made us by his Power, endued us with gifts intellectual? hath any man an Estate or Honour, but he to whom God hath given them? and is not all at his disposal?

Eccl. 6. 2. God did not release his own right, when he entrusted us with the use of any talents: and as to him we are *stewards*, not proprietors, and therefore accountable for all.

Luk. 16. 2. God had a respect to his own glory and service, in his creating of all things: *he made all things for himself*. Pro. 16. 4. Yea he hath dispenced all under this rule, that they be employed for him. This Law every brute creature, and inanimate Being observe: yea the glorious Angels do not deny, or disdain this homage. They are *ministering spirits*, whose utmost abilities are consecrated to the execution of Gods will, tho it be often us poor sinners in whose behalf they serve.

Heb. 1. 14. And must not the same Justice be observed by Men? can any thing be denied God equally, when all is his; and he asketh service by nothing but what's his own? Paul is but righteous, when his labours and sufferings for Christ were most abundant; this he suggests, as well as his privilege by it, when he saith, *The Angel of God whose I am, and whom I serve, stood by me*. David in his large offerings acquits God from being a debtor; and himself of being more than just. *All things come from thee, and of thine own we have given thee*. God chargeth the man who improved not the one Talent, not with unkindness, but injustice: and so will he reprove all that deny him any thing which his Interest requires: *Thou oughtest therefore to have put my Money to the Exchanger, and then I should have received my own with Usury*.

Aet. 27. 2.

1 Chron. 29. 14, 16.

Mat. 25. 27.

You may as well accuse God of Injury, when by his Providence he brings you to Death, Poverty or decay of Parts; as deny him the utmost Service in his Concerns. In the former, he asserts his own Right without your leave; in the other, he yields you opportunity for Consent, to your own Benefit. He offers you an Occasion to trade for your selves with his Stock. If the Testimony of God requires any thing to be laid out for it, which is not his, you have some Pre-
tence to plead; but that can never be, unless when Men do *wickedly for God*, which he abhors.

Job 13. 7.

3. The Lord Jesus hath an additional right to all of us, and our utmost Services by purchase.

The Interests of God and his Claim, as Creator are in the hands of Christ. But as Redeemer his Title is added too, and our Service more strongly demanded: For *ye are bought with a Price; therefore glorify God in your Body, and in your Spirit, which are his.* He may justly serve himself of us, and by us, as his redeemed Captives. We cost him dearer, than our utmost Service can amount to. All our Graces and Gifts are from him by a new Dispensation, and held by a new Tenure. You have an Emblem of it in the Redemption of the First Born, and in the Ransom of all Souls.

1 Cor. 6. 20.

Ex. 13. 15.
& ch. 13. 15.

How much more may Christ use the words to *Philemon*, which *Paul* uttered only as an Instrument of his Conversion? *Albeit, I do not say to thee, how thou owest me even thine own self besides.*

v. 19.

Doth he wrong us, if he calls for our Gifts, our Estates, yea, our Lives; when he continues them to us after our manifest Forfeitures, and gave them to us, if Believers, as he is Head over all things to the Church?

So that if it be a Duty to be just to God as Creator, or just to Christ as Redeemer, all our Lives and Abilities must be devoted to his Interests.

4. No man is a Christian indeed, that dedicateth not himself, Life and all to Christ: And so if it be a Duty to be a
E Christian,

Christian, this devotedness is a Duty as it is essential to our Christian State.

It's true, you may bear the Name; but you cannot be the thing designed by that Name, if you devote not all to the Honour of the Lord Jesus; and design it as the chiefest purpose of your Life, to propagate his Interests. Can any Man be his Subject, who contributes not to his Affairs what in him lieth? Consent to be his; is the greatest Fundamental of Religion; and this includes a solemn Surrender of all to him. Union betwixt Christ and his Members, makes their Interests common; his Interest is their Interest; and they are to submit to his Conduct as their Head, in what their usefulness must consist. Their Character is, *They follow the Lamb wheresoever he goeth*. Their Motto is, *I serve the Lord Christ*.

Rev. 14. 4.
Joh. 12. 26.
Col. 4. 23.

1 Cor. 9. 21.

Religion is not a State of Freedom, to live to our selves under the Cover of Gospel pardon, but an Obligation and Inclination to live to our Blessed Lord; *being not without Law to God, but under the Law to Christ*. Therefore you must account Christianity a Crime, or you must profess the true Faith, and plead Christs Cause to the utmost.

R. 5. It is as much Mens Duties that profess to be Christians, to dedicate their Lives and all to the interest of Christ, as it is to avoid Perjury, Sacrilege and Hypocrisy.

These Crimes are too horrid to necessitate Arguments, to prove that forbearance of them is a Duty. Your Conviction, that to neglect this Dedication is thus Criminal, I hope will suffice. To this End let me reason with you: Is it not Perjury to violate your Baptismal Vow? Yea, sure the greatest: And did not your then vow to fight under Christs Banner, renounce the World, the Flesh and the Devil, and that you would never be ashamed of Christs Cross? Is not your neglect of Dedication of all to Christ, an express violation of this Vow? When you fear, or grudge performing a Christians Work, dare not profess the true Faith and Worship of Christ, nor engage in the support of his Gospel and

and Truths; are not your Estates and Abilities dedicated to the Devil, and your Lusts? Is not Christ deserted? Is not his Cross refused, when you prostitute the Concernments of your Saviour? None can do more for Christ, than the Baptismal Vow includes. What Perjury then lies at your Doors, who are no way concerned for him? Is it no Sacrilege to alien duly dedicated things to common use, without divine Allowance? Were not your Souls, Bodies, Gifts, and all you have, dedicated to the Lord Jesus, when you were Baptized in, or into the Name of the Father, Son, and Spirit? *Mat. 28. 19.* This Surrender was professed, and Gods Propriety and Disposal acknowledged: *All past under the Rod;* and Gods *Ex. 20. 17.* Name was stamped on all thus devoted to his use.

Now when you neglect to honour Christ, and serve his Interest with your Substance, Time and Gifts; do not you withhold what was Consecrated, and apply it to your own carnal Ends and Use? Every idle cowardly Christian, keeps back what is Gods, and not his own. Every Apostate doth the same more grossly: Every Enemy to any Concern of Christ, employs the Consecrated Things of Christ against him.

So that here is Sacrilege at your Door, if you improve not all for Christs Interest in your Places. And this Perjury and Sacrilege is double in any Ministers or Magistrates, who are under Vows and Dedications, additional to what is common to all Christians. Is it not Hypocrisy solemnly to profess to intend, do, and be what we neither do, nor are? Now can you deny that you profess to intend Christs Service, to advance his Name and Interests, and be for his Praise, as Witnesses to him in the World? You appear and would be thought such, in professing to be his Followers: For on these Terms he admits Men to wear his Name. *If any Man will* *Luke 9. 23.* *come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross daily, and follow me.* There he injoins, that Self have not the disposal of us, or ours; That we follow him in his Testi-

mony and Designs which he is carrying on in the World; and abett these still tho the Cross be our daily Associate. All this thou pretendest.

And now when thou refuseth to dedicate thy Life to Christ; dost not thou betray Christ with a Kiss, affront God; and abuse Men by delusive Mockery, and wearest that Title of *Hypocrite*, which thou brandest the upright with? Oh! think of this, you who spend your Time and Estates as fuel to your Lusts; not once laying to heart any Engagement on you, to employ them to higher Ends.

R. 6. All living Christians are chosen Ones, appointed by Christ to advance his Interests in their Day.

Great are the Purposes our Lord is accomplishing. And tho his immediate Power, or the Ministry of Angels, would be effective of them; yet he honours Mortals as Instruments therein. He overturns Satans Throne, erects and propagates his own Kingdom, leads Men into Truth and Holiness, by the Ministration of Men like our selves; tho the effective Virtue be from him.

All are obliged to concur; but living Saints are under a more peculiar anointing for it, and more especially entrusted with it in their respective Stations. He saith of every godly Magistrate, *This is the Son of Man, whom I have made strong for my self.* Of every holy Parent as of Abraham, *For I know him, that he will command his Children and his Household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.* It's true of every upright Minister, *That he is set for the Defence of the Gospel.* Yea, every private Christian is among them, who are an holy Nation, a peculiar People; that they should shew forth the Praises of him, who called them into his marvellous Light. The weakest Christian hath some Influence, and is furnished suitably to what Christ intends by him.

Is it not a great Duty to discharge this glorious Trust, and observe these Precepts which connote our Excellency as well

Ps. 80. 17.

Gen. 18. 19.

Phil. 1. 17.

1 Pet. 2. 9.

as Duty? In this respect, we are they of whom he says, *These are the People I have formed for myself, they shall shew forth my Praise.* If you are Believers, you have a greater aptitude to serve Christ; and devotedness to his Designs is directed to you, above the rest of the World. Isa. 43. 21

This is but keeping up our holy *Profession*, which Christ Heb. 10. 23, 25 is so intent on. And what Engagements had other Saints to transmit to us Christs Truth and Worship, which we are not under to imitate in our Day, for the good of following Ages?

What Good do we enjoy? What advantage doth the Cause of Christ now reap, by the Expence and Labours of Christians in former Days; yea, by the Blood of many faithful Martyrs?

Shall then any thing dear to Christ be so trivial with us, as not command the utmost Service or Suffering? We owe Christ as much as others ever did; we cost him as dear; he hath forgiven us as much, if not more; we hope to be possessed of the same Glory; and his Interests in our Day, are likely to be attended with more glorious Success.

If your Hearts be not obstinate against what God enjoyneth, you must engage in this Duty, which is so apparent by these Reasons, to which many more might be added. Can you after all I have said, let any gasping Concern of Christ want the utmost Aid, which you are able to afford it duly, and in your Places? Or, dare you do any thing fatal to it, whatever be your Temptations? I am led to the Application of this Truth, which I shall attend under these following Particulars.

1. *Exhort.* I would call such of you to deep Repentance, who have employed your Lives and Abilities in opposing the Interests of Christ.

What I shall say under this Head, is not designed to upbraid or reproach any Man; much less to hinder peace with; and love to the most guilty, when you become sensible of the provocation God layeth to your charge: And least of all.

all would I be interpreted to impeach the Innocent, to whom the things perpetrated by Men under any distinguishing Character with them, must needs be afflictive.

My aim is only to bring you to Repentance, if so be, your Hearts are not so desperately hardened, as to bind on your selves those Woes, which so unchristian a Behaviour hath exposed you to. I am induced to this displeasing Work, by the opportunity which this mixed Congregation affords me of speaking to such, whom I expect not to meet elsewhere; and I fear, this Admonition to you, is too much neglected by such, from whom it might be better resented.

Repentance is the great design of the present Providences we are under, and the best expedient to prevent the Evils we are threatened with. God will embitter that profane and persecuting Spirit, which hath raged in the Church of England; and tho forgiveness be our Duty, yet Providence levels its Arrow against the guilty, in a manner too extraordinary to be disregarded; but how few consider the dealings of God, even when Cloathed with the greatest Light and Wonder?

Joh. 16. 2.

2 Cor. 2. 7. 8.

I know the Guilty have Ignorance enough to impute to their Zeal for truth, what they have done from their innate Enmity to Christ; but mistakes do not acquit in a Matter so important: And Persecutors never ruin the Godly under a good Character; but *think they do God good Service*, in destroying whom ever they can call Factious, or Schismatical. The concern of Christ is too hid, not to be oft mistaken by Sinners; *For had they known it, they would not have Crucified the Lord of Glory.* And profane Persecutors do as truly wound Christ in his Doctrine, Worship and Members, as if they laid violent Hands on his very Person.

Oh profane Ones! Who else could it be but Christ, whom you opposed in his Members, whilst you persecuted the most serious imitators of him, and Men of all their Neighbors most devoted to him.

Was

Was it not Christ in his Gospel you despised, when you ridicul'd the most essential Doctrins of his Gospel?

Have you not acted against Christ in his Ministers, whiles you stopped the Mouths of such, who were as likely to advance his Interests by their Ministry as any others; yea, and to this added a heap of malicious Lies and Slanders, lest Christ might be served by them?

Have you not hated and laden with Contempt the most probable Evidences of real Holiness; as a strict Life, serious Discourse, and holy Tenderness?

Is it not the special Testimony of Christ in your Day, which you have resisted, when you disabled from Service, and exposed to extream Hardships; all that considerable number who stand and suffer for this? *viz.* that the Ministry of the Gospel and the Communion of Saints, ought not to be clog'd with sinful, needless, or uninstituted Terms and Practices; to the wounding of Conscience, dividing the Church, hazarding thereformed Interest, and destruction of Christian Love and Serious Piety.

What hath all your Pretence been, but a Zeal for what your selves call indifferent? And for these you have hated, opposed, and almost at last quite ruined the undoubted Interests of the Blessed Jesus. How much have you done to give a fatal Wound to the very Form of your Religion, not to be recovered by a little unseasonable Noise?

Surely, it's high time that your personal Irreligion and Profaneness should force you to suspect; that you are not so likely to know or serve the Cause of Christ, as others, so much more pious and concerned than your selves.

Ought you not at last fear, you have been acted by the Devil against Christ, especially when you reflect on the Methods you have used? Would Christ have put you to serve him by Lying, Perjury, profane Scoffing, and cruel Persecution, to the utmost of your Power? Were Sabbaths spent by you in disturbing Meetings, as if you were the Men that designed

designed to serve Christ thereby? If nothing else will cause you to suspect, that Enmity against Christ did govern you; consider how you treated any of your own Church, who were Pious and Serious: How much more were they valued by you, than us whom you pretended some Difference with, as Cause of Dislike?

Luke 13. 3.

God calls you by me to deep Humblings for these things: Be convinced and ashamed of your Opposition to him; and be assured, *if you repent not you shall all perish.* Can you pretend so much as to say, *To me to live is Christ?* Who would have Christ and Holiness, have as little Interest in others as they have in your selves. Was it not too much that your selves did not live to Christ, but that you must grudge and ruin any that did live to him?

Act. 9. 4.

Jud. v. 15.

1 Thess. 2. 16.

How will you answer the Lord Jesus, when he shall ask you, *Why persecutest thou me?* What account can you give of all your *hard Speeches uttered against him*, his Truths and People? Must not you fear you have filled up your Sins; and the wrath of God is come upon you to the uttermost, by forbidding the Ministers of Christ to preach his Gospel? How must you wail, when he shall at his Appearance convince you, that you have pierced him in your evil Treatment of those Men and Things, which he will then own to be his Interests?

In pity to your Souls, consider, Is this you have done suitable to your Baptismal Vow? Doth your Profession of Christianity oblige you to do nothing for Christ and his Cause, except venting your Scoff and Rage against things wherein his Interest seemeth most concerned? The Lord fasten these things on your Hearts, and force you to a Repentance as notorious as your Scandal.

I speak not these things as if Repentance were confined to you; we have all need of it: And if God intend good for us, he will encline all sorts to it, according to our respective Guilt: But yours is most notorious; and God seems by his present Dealings, to point more directly at it. Having

Having said what I think my self engaged to suggest to profane and persecuting Ones, I must solemnly warn you against all censorious Thoughts and evil Speeches, against any godly Ministers or People of the Church of *England*; their Differences with us will not justify uncharitable Surmises, nor reproachful Language against them. All good Men aim at one thing, even to serve Christ; tho they do not agree always in the Means, God serves himself by the different Sentiments of his People, and hath his own Methods to convince and cement them; greater Union is reserved for that *new Jerusalem that will descend out of Heaven from God*, that beareth the Form of a Cube; its of *one measure*, and there carnal Interests will not divide. Rev. 21. ro. 18.

2 *Exb.* Let all real Christians live more entirely to the Service of Christ and his Interests.

You may be humbled that you have done no more for him, and that your unusefulness to his Concerns, is imputable to your remiss Temper, more than want of Talents. How many of your Gifts were never employed to advance Truth? His Members have been in straits, and his Gospel languishing, when your Riches were hoarded up. Many neglected opportunities of Service, must reproach you, when the Frame of your Hearts bespeak them tender. Many have been your industrious Contrivances, wherein Christ hath had the least, if any share.

Oh! Be awakened this Day to strong Resolves, that hereafter *you to live shall be Christ*; yea, only Christ, and all other Interests subordinated to his. Let all you have be laid anew on his Altar. Get your Hearts lifted up in the ways of the Lord; and be wholly for him, whatever Choice shall be made by others. Satan's Instruments are industrious, unwearied, and prodigal in his Service; Christ hath but few engaged in his behalf; and shall the declinings of his Interests lye at your door? 2 Cron. 17. 6.

I shall annex some Directions and Motives.

Dir. 1. Exercise your selves in the advancement of the Interests of Christ in your own Souls.

If Christ Reign wholly in us, he will Reign greatly by us. *Grow up into Christ in all things, till you are filled with all the fulness of God*; and your capacity and readiness for his advancement will be enlarged. Be more acquainted with him, and you will judge him worth your Service, and highly value all that's his. Flaming Grace will contrive much: What can I serve Christ in? and freely consecrate all to him. Whereas, our backwardness is an infallible sign that his

A Sermon Preached

his Life is feeble in us. In a word, He that neglects Christ in himself, will be little fit for, or concerned in the advancement of Christ in the World; nor indeed be blessed with much Success in his Attempts for it.

2. *Dir.* See that your Aims be sincere in all which you seem to serve Christ by.

1 Cron. 29. 17.
Phil. 1. 15.
Mat. 6. 2.

Low or bad Purposes spoil good Works. God trieth the Heart (in our best Services,) and loveth Uprightness. Good Sermons were spoiled by Envy, and charitable Deeds by Ostentation. It's unhappy when our Hearts have not higher Aims for Christ, than our Hands at best can accomplish; but it's wicked when what we seem to offer to Christ, is a Sacrifice to our Idols.

3. *Dir.* *Chearfully* dedicate all you have to the Concernments of Christ.

Act. 5. 3.

It's a cursed Wedg which is reserved from this Dedication, whether it be Estate, Relation, Gifts or Life. What *Ananias* spared, spoiled the acceptance of the Part he offered; tho it be not always necessary all should be parted with, yet it is necessary that nothing be unemployed, when Fidelity to Christ calls for it; and it ceaseth to be yours, when it cannot be kept without treachery to his Interests. As all must be dedicated, so it must be *cheerfully* laid out, as what is fit and best. None but free-will Offerings and a *cheerful Giver*, are lovely in Gods account. It's left on Record as the Praise of some, *They took joyfully the spoiling of their Goods*. Indeed, the hardest thought in our greatest Toils and Expence for Christ, should be, blessed be God, that I have any thing to express my Love and Zeal for Christ by.

2 Cor. 9. 7.
Heb. 10. 34.

4. *Dir.* Be always solicitous to know what the Interests of Christ be, which you should at present serve; especially if there be Doubts concerning them.

The Gospel is an infallible Rule in general; Providence and the Series of Prophecies may contribute to your direction, under the guidance of that higher Rule. Undoubted Duties must always be done in their season; undoubted Truths must never be denied; yea, must always be professed, if some damage to the Interests of Christ do not attend it, beyond what our Profession of that Truth at that time, will countervail; doubtful Sins must never be committed, undoubted Sins must be discouraged in our place. Present Good which is less, may not be bought by the certain loss of a greater Good at some distance; nor at the expence of a greater Evil in sure Prospect. The more material Interests of Christ must not be sacrificed to them less considerable, nor undoubted to doubtful: I can but glance at these.

You

You ought to be assured in every thing you engage in as for Christ, that it be his Concern and your Work; yea, your present Duty, which a greater is not excluded by. Assurance in this will command your Engaging for it, and encourage under all Difficulties in it.

Mistakes herein cause great Disorders, kindle a fiery Zeal, which is oft fatal to the Concerns of Christ. And whatever we do to advance these mistaken Interests, are Offerings to a Lust, and unprofitable to our selves. It would amaze one to see the heat of some in supporting Errors, opposing Truth, destroying Peace, and propagating a weak Notion, to the hazard of the most considerable Interests of Christ. Rom. 16. 2.

But yet our indifferency is Carnal, when Christ seemeth by his Providence, by Satans violent Assault, or by the great Influence of a Truth at that time, to call us to engage strongly in it; tho it appears at other times less momentous. To say no more, search well what will be most for Christs Glory.

5. *Dir.* Mortify those Lusts which most hinder, and improve in those Graces which most forward your living entirely to Christ.

Mens Lusts are their greatest obstacles to Service; and it's impossible to advance Christ considerably, if improved Graces afford not willingness and strength: Therefore trample on your Pride which will disdain low Service, and fret at any Contempt which attends your Labours: But be more Humble, and you'll agree to be any thing, so Christ may be all: Be more free from Covetousness, which grudgeth all expence and loss for Christ, selleth Truth to get or save a little Dross: But get more heavenly Mindedness, which disdaineth Earth so it may but get more Treasure in Heaven. Cast away that slavish Fear, which betrays Conscience to a mortals Threatning. But be more endued with holy Courage, which will dare to be zealous for Christ in the very Face of Danger. Silence Unbelief that still suggests Difficulties, but hides from you both supplies of Strength and the promised Rewards. Whereas, more Faith will still enlarge your Service, in the view of sufficient Aids and an eternal Crown. Above all trample on Selfishness, which most devour eth our Talents: Whereas, a publick Spirit and superlative Love to Christ, would constrain your Consecration of all to him, as one well deserving of it. Dan. 3. 13. 2 Tim. 1. 12. 2 Cor. 4. 18. 3 Cor. 5. 13. 14.

6. *Dir.* I might add, that you ought to manage all your designed Service as may be most conducive to the advancement of these Interests of Christ.

Great Prudence is necessary to give an advantage to all our Undertakings, that the Success we aim at be not prevented.

But I have no more time than to conclude all with a few *Motives* to this Duty.

1. *Mot.* It's the Interest of Christ I am persuading you to dedicate your Lives to. It's that Christ who hath so amazingly denied himself for you, to whom you owe so much, from whom you have received and still expect such great things. Oh! What Honour is it to serve him! Being his Interests they must needs deserve our Regard, and command our Industry: This glorious One would not stake his Glory, and set his Heart on Trifles. And who but the unbelieving and ungrateful can grudge him any thing? Methinks a Reflection on any thing as his Concern, would inspire with all that can enervate our Attempts.

2. *Mot.* It's but our Lives at most, which are to be dedicated to him.

They are short, and so it's but a little while and the Hardship is over. They are

A Sermon Preached, &c.

are but poor and mean things to be an Offering so acceptable to him. Alas! How inconsiderable is all we can do or suffer, that they should reflect any Glory on him who fills the Heavens, and is now (by us) raising a Monument which will be admired for ever? Who would not strive to contribute most to his blessed Designs? How can our little Matters be laid out to so great Purposes?

2. *Mr.* In serving the Interests of Christ, we do in the best manner serve our own. What we do for him, he doth not need; but if we refuse it, we are undone. We must shortly reckon for all Talents: And how uncomfortable will the Account be, when little can be reckoned as placed to *Christ's* Account?

But there is Gain by the most costly Service, and Profit by the worst of Hardships. The Advantage is more than an hundred fold; if you live to him you shall ever live with him; a share in his Glory will be yours, if you partake in his Concerns. *If any Man serve me, him will my Father honour.* How wisely is our All laid out, when it will yield such great Returns? Look upward, and see what Mansions Christ is preparing for you, whiles you are labouring and laying out your selves for him: And he is like to receive the most illustrious Crown, who yields the greatest Service. Surely you are injurious to your selves in sparing any Seed now, when you have *Christ's* word for so vast an Increase. *He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; but he that soweth bountifully, shall also reap bountifully.* Oh! into what a State will you soon pass from an useful Life? *To die will be Gain, if to you to live be Christ.* In Eternity you will find all your Endeavors carefully Recorded, and abundantly Rewarded.

Must not you say from this moment, Whatever I can do, and all that I Possess shall be devoted to Him and his Interests, Engage then in his Service; you have Angels and all Saints sharers with you in the undertaking and Christ at the Head of this Royal Company. They are Interests will stand, tho you refuse to assist; they do still advance, tho invisibly to us. If you dedicate not your Lives to the Commandments of Christ, you must lay them out for the Devil; one of them is served at all times, and by all Persons. Faithful Service will give a great Testimony to the Lord Jesus, and yield wonderful advantage to such under your Influence, whose Good you are inclined to endeavour. You will prejudice no Interest by this, but the Interests of the Devil, which commenced and grow still on the manifest Ruins of Mankind: And ought you not to oppose him, to whose Usurpation are owing all the Disorders and Calamities in the World, which Evils are redressed to the Degree of the Advancement of the Interests of Christ, and no further.

Can you after all this refuse to bemoan the World, where so many opposite Interests are set up against Christ; and pity Sinners, who so blindly resist and impatiently bear the merciful and just Attempts of the Lord Jesus? Must not every Soul Echo to the Apostle in my Text, *Now to me to live is Christ?*

The whole Discourse is so applicable to your Lordship and Brethren, that I need no more than intreat, yea, charge you to Act in your Places, as Men to whom to live is Christ. Let not any opportunity for Service to him, bring your Souls under the Guilt of Negligence, nor yield Christ matter to upbraid you with. A Trust is in your Hands; see that the Ends of God be faithfully answered. Consider that place, *Thou hast given a Banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the Truth.* Resolve then in your Station, that if Christ gain not by our Power, our Consciences shall not reproach us with refusing to dedicate all our Abilities to him, whose Glory we chiefly aimed at, and to whose Interest we are fully devoted.

F I N I S.

